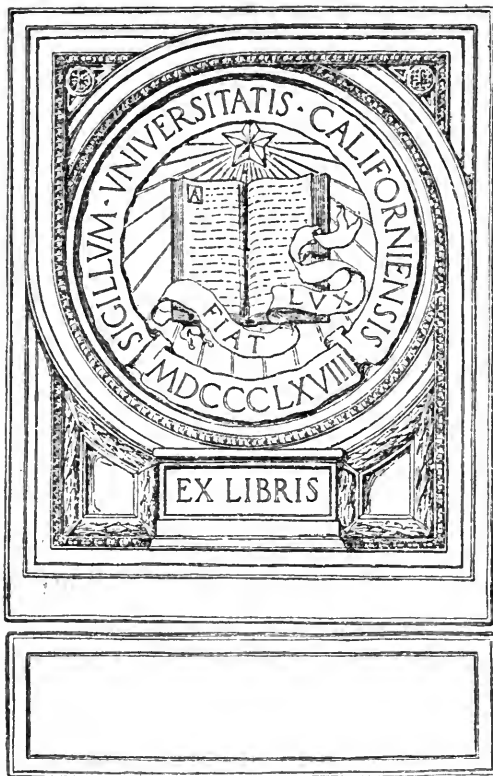


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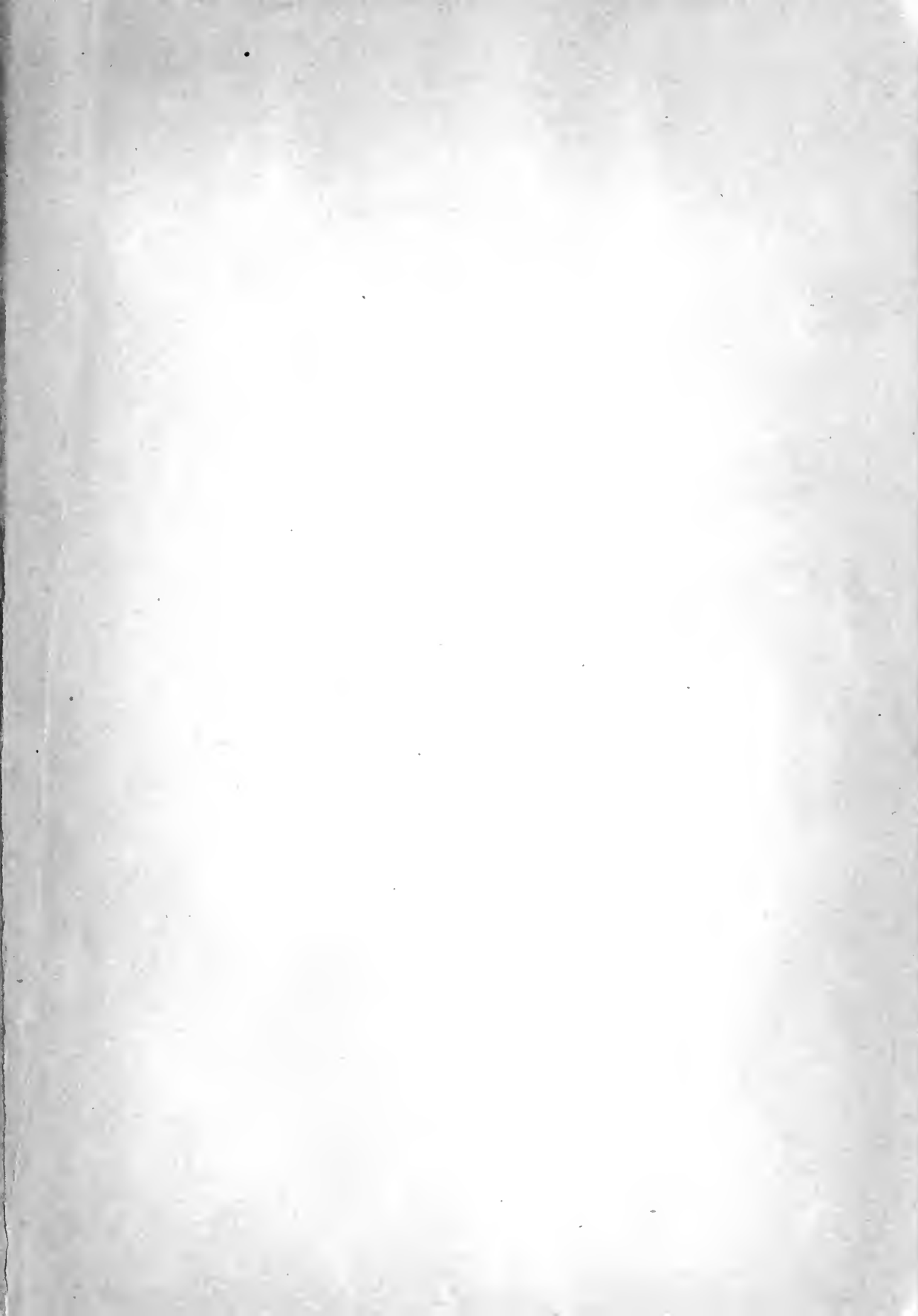


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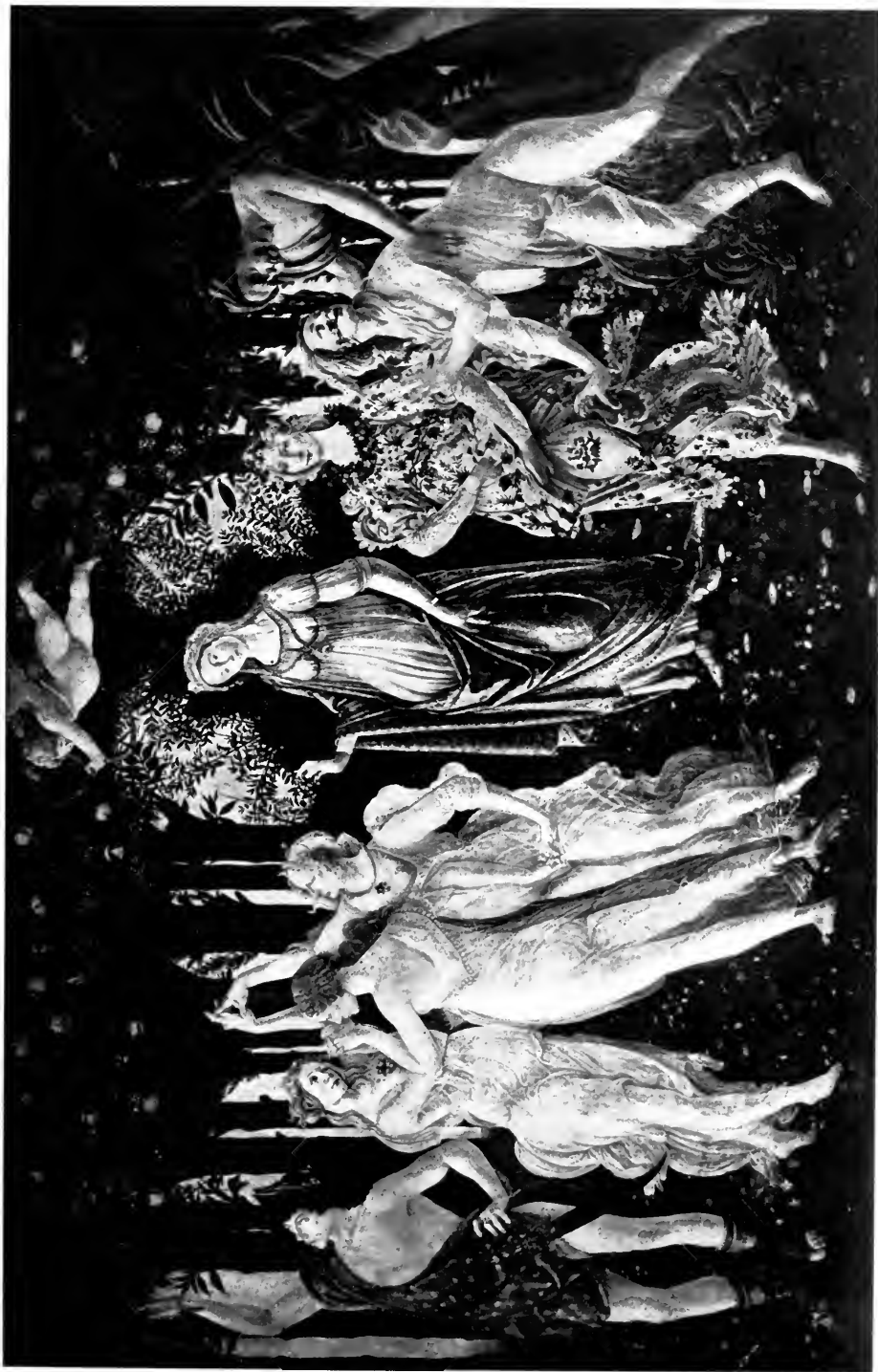




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BOTTICELLI
BIRTH OF VENUS
UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE





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FINE ARTS



BOTTICELLI
ADORATION OF THE MAGI
UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE







PORTRAIT OF BOTTICELLI

BY HIMSELF

In Botticelli's picture of the "Adoration of the Magi" the painter has introduced the figure of himself standing in the group of Florentine citizens. It is this likeness which is here reproduced.

Sandro Botticelli

BORN 1447: DIED 1510
FLORENTINE SCHOOL

JULIA CARTWRIGHT

"PORTFOLIO," VOL. 13

SANDRO BOTTICELLI, or, to use his original name, Alessandro di Mariano Filipepi, was born at Florence in the year 1447. His father was a citizen in comfortable circumstances; and Vasari tells us that Sandro, the youngest of Mariano's four sons, was educated with great care, and "instructed in all such things as children are usually taught before they choose a calling." But the boy's strong will first showed itself in a violent distaste to learning. He was constantly discontented and absolutely refused to give his attention to reading, writing, and accounts, says Vasari; until at last his father, despairing of ever turning him into a scholar, placed him in the shop of a goldsmith named Botticello, a great friend of his and an excellent workman, who promised to teach the boy his trade.

Sandro was destined for higher things, and soon showed the artistic bent of his genius; but this early training in the goldsmith's shop was not thrown away. He took from his first master not only the name by which he has become famous, but the precision of line and patient attention to detail which marked all his work in after-life. From him too he learned that use of gold which he turned to such good account in his painting, as we see in the foliage of his backgrounds, in his boy-angels' rippling hair, and the embroidered tissue of his Virgin's robes. But he did not remain many years with Botticello. At a time when Antonio Pollaiuolo and Andrea Verrocchio were goldsmiths as well as painters, there was naturally a good deal of intercourse between the men of both crafts. Before long Sandro was seized with so passionate a desire to embrace the profession of an artist that his father, knowing the force of the boy's inclinations, placed him with the Carmelite monk, Fra Filippo Lippi, then one of the first masters in Florence. This time Sandro had found his vocation. He devoted himself earnestly to his new studies, and soon attained a degree of perfection which no one had expected from the wayward, eccentric boy. By the time of Fra Filippo's death Sandro, although only twenty-two years of age, had already acquired the reputation of being the best painter in Florence.

The same year that Filippo died the young Lorenzo de' Medici succeeded to the government of Florence, and from the first showed Botticelli a generous and liberal patronage, which was never afterwards withdrawn. Through his friendship Sandro was now introduced to the eminent scholars whom Lorenzo loved to collect around him. We are inclined to wonder how the youth who would not learn to read and write fared in this company. But at whatever time of his life Sandro acquired that knowledge of classical learning which his works unfold, he possessed in a rare degree the feeling for

beauty that was sufficient in itself to form a close link with the scholars of the Renaissance. . . .

Besides the Madonnas, with which we are accustomed to associate Botticelli's name, he executed at this period other works on a larger scale. Commissions came to him from all sides, and the fifteen years which elapsed between Fra Filippo's death and Sandro's return from Rome mark a period of great productive energy in his life, during which many of his finest works, both in painting and engraving, were executed.

Botticelli's love for his scholars, and for all devoted to art, is mentioned by more than one writer. Filippino Lippi, in whom he saw the son of the master to whom he owed his own training, was the best beloved of all his pupils, while this same sympathy for rising artists drew him to one many years younger than himself, but already famous, Michelangelo Buonarroti. . . .

It is curious to learn from Vasari that Botticelli, who seems to us so intensely in earnest, delighted in jesting, and indulged in wild practical jokes at the expense of his scholars and friends which made the walls of the workshop ring with laughter. But for all that a vein of deep melancholy runs through his works, and even when he most wished to be gay, he is sad, as it were, in spite of himself. . . . He loved everything that was fair, the shape of the opening rose, the changing ripples on the waves, the grace of the human form; and yet his imagination is ever beating against the walls of this life, asking what lies without, and whither we are tending. This it was which led him to the study of Dante, this which in later years made him lend a willing ear to Savonarola's warnings. This element of sadness becomes more evident in his mythological paintings than in his Madonnas, where its presence is more in harmony with the subject before him. He had breathed new life and meaning into the old forms of mediæval art, and now he was called upon to illustrate those classic myths that were the delight of Renaissance scholars. The beauty of both worlds was equally clear to him, and Lorenzo, quick at discerning the capabilities of the men around him, employed Botticelli to decorate his palace with Greek myths, of which the most generally known is the "Birth of Venus" now in the Uffizi. Besides allegorical subjects he was ordered by Lorenzo to paint several altar-pieces, many of which are still to be seen in the churches and galleries of Florence. Probably most of these works were painted before his visit to Rome, but the only one which bears any date is the fresco of St. Augustine in the church of Ognissanti, painted in 1480. Soon afterwards he was summoned to Rome, together with Ghirlandajo and Perugino, by Pope Sixtus IV., to adorn his newly erected chapel in the Vatican.

The wide reputation which Botticelli had by this time attained appears from his appointment as chief superintendent of the works. His share in the actual execution of the frescos, however, was limited to three of the large subjects, and the earlier portraits of the series of twenty-eight Popes, which are still to be seen on the upper part of the wall. Of the twelve frescos in which scenes from the life of Moses on one wall and from the life of Christ on the other are represented, the three which fell to Sandro's share were "Moses in the Land of Midian," the "Temptation of Christ," and the "Destruction of Korah." But while he was employed on these frescos of the Sistine Chapel, Pope Sixtus IV. died, the works were interrupted, and Sandro returned to Florence.

Before his visit to Rome he had made his first essay in the art of engraving, and besides supplying designs for the illustrated edition of Dante published at Florence in 1482 by Baldini, had himself executed several of the plates. His devotion to the study of the Divine Poet was a remarkable feature of his character, and the engravings show how thoroughly the painter entered into the poet's thoughts. . . .

The last years of Lorenzo de' Medici's life witnessed a marked change in the thoughts and feelings of the Florentines. In 1490 the Dominican friar, Fra Girolamo Savonarola, came to Florence, and, by the eloquence of his preaching and the boldness of a zeal which knew no respect of persons, commanded general attention. The chosen friends of Lorenzo's circle, and most renowned scholars of his court, were among the multitude who flocked to hear him, and of all classes in Florence none embraced the new doctrines with greater enthusiasm than the artists. Sandro threw himself heart and soul into the work of the great revival, and, in Vasari's words, became "a zealous *piagnone*." [A name given to Savonarola's followers, signifying weeper, mourner, or grumbler.]

A striking proof of his constancy to the memory of Savonarola, and his firm belief in the ultimate accomplishment of the friar's prophecies, remain in his famous picture of the "Nativity," which he painted in 1500, and which plainly refutes Vasari's assertion, that in this religious frenzy he gave up painting altogether. If, after that, he painted other pictures, we hear no more of them; soon, we know, he sank into premature old age, worn out by the ceaseless toil of hand and brain. We have Vasari's melancholy picture of the old man forced to go on crutches, unable to stand upright, and depending for his bread on the charity of others. So he lingered on till the 17th of May, 1510, when death at length brought him his well-earned rest, and he was buried in his father's tomb in the old parish church of Ognissanti.

Such, so far as our uncertain knowledge can show, were the chief features of Sandro Botticelli's life. In the breadth and richness of his culture, in the varied character of the subjects which he chose, in the greatness of his aims, and the mystical bent of his genius, he is in an especial manner the representative in art of the age of the Medici, and embodies for us the varied elements and conflicting ideas of that memorable period.

The Art of Botticelli

JOHN RUSKIN

"FORS CLAVIGERA"

BOTTICELLI was the only painter of Italy who understood the thoughts of heathens and Christians equally, and could in a measure paint both Aphrodite and the Madonna. So that he is, on the whole, the most universal of painters; and take him all in all, the greatest Florentine workman.)

GEORGE B. ROSE

"RENAISSANCE MASTERS"

IT is very difficult to write impartially of Botticelli. Those whom he pleases at all are apt to love him to excess and see in his works all possible and impossible perfections; while those who are not touched by his peculiar charm are disposed to look upon him as merely quaint and curious. The truth lies between these two extremes. He is not a great master like Raphael and Leonardo, but he has a singular and personal fascination that marks him as one apart, and gives him a niche in the temple of fame that is all his own. His works are like certain music that strikes a responsive chord only in particular hearts, but a chord that vibrates with an intense and special harmony. He who has caught its singular charm has a joy of his own forever, but he must not blame his neighbor upon whose ear it jars. . . .

No artist has had greater vicissitudes of fame. In his prime he was the favorite

painter of the brilliant court of Lorenzo the Magnificent, but with the death of his illustrious patron he sank under the influence of Savonarola, so inimical to his genius, and in his old age he was eclipsed by the glories of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael. He was almost forgotten when at length he passed away in poverty and neglect, and he seemed consigned to hopeless oblivion when Mr. Ruskin and the English pre-Raphaelites proclaimed his greatness and made him the object of a cult that is extending every day. His pictures, little prized forty years ago, are now sought for with infinite eagerness, and are numbered among the most precious gems of the richest galleries.

One reason of the high regard in which he is now held is the prevailing practice of studying art historically. No artist represents so perfectly a particular moment in history. He stands at the exact point where the mediæval is aspiring toward the classical with infinite but ineffectual desire. In him the Middle Age stretches out its arms with unutterable yearning toward the goddess of Grecian beauty rising again resplendent from the sea, but she still eludes its grasp. He belongs to the time when men kept lamps burning before the bust of Plato as before the Virgin's shrine, yet failed to grasp the essence of Hellenic culture. In a little while the full day is to burst upon them, revealing shapes of classic purity that are to be preserved by Raphael's and by Titian's brush. But Botticelli's contemporaries are still in the early dawn, lit up by a dim and misty light through which the radiant forms of the Grecian goddesses look thin and pale. . . .

Though one of the worst anatomists, he is one of the greatest draughtsmen of the Renaissance. This may seem a contradiction in terms when applied to a painter who dealt so largely with the nude, yet it is true. The anatomy of his figures is usually wretched.

Yet he is one of the greatest masters of the single line that ever lived. He treats the human body simply as a pattern for a living arabesque. As a lineal decorator he stands supreme. In point of color he is perhaps the best of the Florentine school, sometimes bright, usually harmonious, nearly always charming. Yet he subordinates coloring so thoroughly to the line that his pictures have been described as tinted drawings. The tendency of color is usually toward the obliteration of the outline. With him it serves only to accentuate it. In these days when it is the fashion to confound the distinction between the arts, his pictures may be described as symphonies of lines. And all of them are lines of grace. Such harmonious curves it would be difficult to find elsewhere. Frequently they are false to nature, an outrage upon the human anatomy, and to appreciate them we must forget how men are made, and look upon them merely as parts of an arabesque design. We shall then perceive that as lineal decorations they are endowed with a wonderful beauty.

Another merit which he possesses in an extraordinary degree is the presentation of movement. His figures are all in motion or ready to move. It is not a strong movement dependent upon muscular power, it is the light, quick, graceful movement whose seat is in the nerves. His walking figures nearly all rest lightly on the ball of the foot in a position that they could not retain for a moment. They are like instantaneous photographs taken when motion is at the highest point of its curve. And this motion is always graceful. However bad the figures may be in point of anatomy, they always move with an exquisite rhythm. Indeed, the grace of their movements is enhanced by their very imperfection. When we see motion in a body of perfect outline, its grace is only what we expect, and our attention is attracted most by the plastic beauty of the form itself. But when we see these thin, ill-drawn bodies moving so gracefully, it strikes us with all the force of a surprise, and there being no plastic loveliness to charm the eye, we surrender ourselves entirely to the sense of grace. . . .

He is the painter of the breeze. In his pictures it blows continually, sometimes quaintly represented as issuing from the wind-god's mouth, sometimes as only revealed in the flutter of garments—a flutter in which is expressed all the buoyant joy and vitality of the zephyr. No one has ever depicted so faithfully or so daintily the effects of the breeze playing with a woman's vestments.

And what vestments they are! Sometimes heavy, sometimes light, sometimes mere gauzy draperies that only serve to enhance the rhythmic grace of the moving limbs, they fall or flutter in delightful folds, and are usually adorned with those delicious embroideries which were only produced in their perfection during the Middle Ages, when time was a matter of no importance, and when a handmaid would spend years in the beautifying of a garment, as a monk would pass his life in the illumination of a missal. Embroideries so fanciful or so charming have never been depicted by the brush. And however classical the subject, it is clothed in these quaintly beautiful draperies of the Middle Ages undreamed of by the Greeks.

He was the painter of small groups and of single figures. In a large field he lost himself. His great frescos in the Sistine Chapel are charming in many of their details, but the composition is confusing—a confusion heightened by the insertion into one picture of successive episodes of the same story, so that it is only with great labor that we can make out the meaning; and they can scarcely be said to have a general plan. He is like many writers who can tell a short story well, but cannot handle the complicated threads of a long romance. Within his narrow limitations his composition is pleasing, but when he attempts it on too large a scale we see that he has overpassed his powers. . . .

He is one of the most poetical of all painters, with a quaint, sweet poetry that we love sometimes beyond its merits, like some of the old lyrics of Elizabethan and Stuart days, so naïve, so touching, so full of delicate fancies and pleasing affectations, and possessed of a haunting rhythm and a delightful freshness that can never be forgotten. They, too, sing of Grecian gods with the same spirit of mediæval phantasy, striving with the same unsuccess to grasp the spirit of Ovid or Theocritus. The painters of his day were mostly realists, but Botticelli was a poet and a dreamer, living apart in a fairyland of his own creation.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

“RENAISSANCE IN ITALY”

SANDRO BOTTICELLI is one of those artists much respected in their own day, who suffered eclipse from the superior splendor of immediate successors, and to whom, through sympathy stimulated by prolonged study of the fifteenth century, we have of late paid tardy and somewhat exaggerated honors. His fellow-workers seem to have admired him as an able draughtsman gifted with a rare if whimsical imagination; but no one recognized in him a leader of his age. For us he has an almost unique value as representing the interminglement of antique and modern fancy at a moment of transition, as embodying in some of his pictures the subtlest thought and feeling of men for whom the classic myths were beginning to live once more, while new guesses were timidly hazarded in the sphere of orthodoxy.

A friend writing to me from Italy speaks thus of Botticelli, and of the painters associated with him: “When I ask myself what it is I find fascinating in him—for instance, which of his pictures, or what element in them—I am forced to admit that it is the touch of paganism in him, the fairy-story element, *the echo of a beautiful lapsed mythology which he has found the means of transmitting.*” The words I have printed in italics seem to me very true. At the same time we must bear in mind that the scientific investigation of nature had not in the fifteenth century begun to stand between the

sympathetic intellect and the outer world. There was still the possibility of that "lapsed mythology," the dream of poets and the delight of artists, seeming positively the best form of expression for sentiments aroused by nature.

Self-confident sensuality had not as yet encouraged painters to substitute a florid rhetoric for the travail of their brain; nor was enough known about antiquity to make the servile imitation of Greek or Roman fragments possible. Yet scholarship had already introduced a novel element into the culture of the nation. It was no doubt with a kind of wonder that the artists heard of Fauns and Sylvens, and the birth of Aphrodite from the waves. Such fables took deep hold upon their fancy, stirring them to strange and delicate creations, the offspring of their own thought, and no mere copies of marbles seen in statue-galleries. The very imperfection of these pictures lends a value to them in the eyes of the student, by helping him to comprehend exactly how the revelations of the humanists affected the artistic sense of Italy.

BERNHARD BERENSON "FLORENTINE PAINTERS OF THE RENAISSANCE"

NEVER pretty, scarcely ever charming or even attractive; rarely correct in drawing, and seldom satisfactory in color; in types ill-favored; in feeling acutely intense and even dolorous — what is it then that makes Sandro Botticelli so irresistible that nowadays we may have no alternative but to worship or abhor him? The secret is this: that in European painting there has never again been an artist so indifferent to representation and so intent upon presentation. Educated in a period of triumphant naturalism, he plunged at first into mere representation with almost self-obliterating earnestness; the pupil of Fra Filippo, he was trained to a love of spiritual *genre*; himself gifted with strong instincts for the significant, he was able to create such a type of the thinker as in his fresco of St. Augustine; yet in his best years he left everything, even spiritual significance, behind him, and abandoned himself to the presentation of those qualities alone which in a picture are *directly* life-communicating and life-enhancing. Those of us who care for nothing in the work of art but what it represents are either powerfully attracted or repelled by his unhackneyed types and quivering feeling; but if we are such as have an imagination of touch and of movement that it is easy to stimulate, we feel a pleasure in Botticelli that few, if any, other artists can give us. Long after we have exhausted both the intensest sympathies and the most violent antipathies with which the representative elements in his pictures may have inspired us, we are only on the verge of fully appreciating his real genius. This in its happiest moments is an unparalleled power of perfectly combining values of touch with values of movement.

Look, for instance, at Botticelli's "Venus Rising from the Sea." Throughout, the tactile imagination is roused to a keen activity, by itself almost as life-heightening as music. But the power of music is even surpassed where, as in the goddess's mane-like tresses of hair fluttering to the wind, not in disorderly rout but in masses yielding only after resistance, the movement is directly life-communicating. The entire picture presents us with the quintessence of all that is pleasurable to our imagination of touch and of movement. How we revel in the force and freshness of the wind, in the life of the wave! And such an appeal he always makes. His subject may be fanciful, as in the "Realm of Venus" (the "Spring"); religious, as in the Sistine Chapel frescos or in the "Coronation of the Virgin;" political, as in the recently discovered "Pallas Taming a Centaur;" or even crudely allegorical, as in the Louvre frescos,—no matter how unpropitious, how abstract the idea, the vivid appeal to our tactile sense, the life-communicating movement is always there. Indeed, at times it seems that the less artistic the theme the more artistic the fulfilment, the painter being impelled to give the

utmost values of touch and movement to just those figures which are liable to be read off as mere empty symbols. Thus, on the figure representing political disorder—the Centaur—in the “Pallas,” Botticelli has lavished his most intimate gifts. He constructs the torso and flanks in such a way that every line, every indentation, every boss appeals so vividly to the sense of touch that our fingers feel as if they had everywhere been in contact with his body, while his face gives to a still heightened degree this convincing sense of reality, every line functioning perfectly for the osseous structure of brow, nose, and cheeks. As to the hair—imagine shapes having the supreme life of line you may see in the contours of licking flames, and yet possessed of all the plasticity of something which caresses the hand that models it to its own desire!

In fact, the mere subject, and even representation in general, was so indifferent to Botticelli, that he appears almost as if haunted by the idea of communicating the *unembodied* values of touch and movement. Now there is a way of rendering even tactile values with almost no body, and that is by translating them as faithfully as may be into values of movement. For instance: we want to render the roundness of a wrist without the slightest touch of either light or shade; we simply give the movement of the wrist's outline and the movement of the drapery as it falls over it, and the roundness is communicated to us almost entirely in terms of movement. But let us go one step further. Take this line that renders the roundness of the wrist, or a more obvious example, the lines that render the movements of the tossing hair, the fluttering draperies, and the dancing waves in the “Birth of Venus”—take these lines alone with all their power of stimulating our imagination of movement, and what do we have? Pure values of movement abstracted, unconnected with any representation whatever. This kind of line, then, being the quintessence of movement, has, like the essential elements in all the arts, a power of stimulating our imagination and of directly communicating life. Well! imagine an art made up entirely of these quintessences of movement-values, and you will have something that holds the same relation to representation that music holds to speech—and this art exists, and is called lineal decoration. In this art of arts Sandro Botticelli may have had rivals in Japan and elsewhere in the East, but in Europe never. To its demands he was ready to sacrifice everything that habits acquired under Filippino and Pollaiuolo,—and his employers!—would permit. The representative element was for him mere *libretto*: he was happiest when his subject lent itself to translation into what may be called a lineal symphony. And to this symphony everything was made to yield; tactile values were translated into values of movement, and, for the same reason,—to prevent the drawing of the eye inward, to permit it to devote itself to the rhythm of the line,—the backgrounds were either entirely suppressed or kept as simple as possible. Color also, with almost a contempt for its representative function, Botticelli entirely subordinated to his lineal scheme, compelling it to draw attention to the line, rather than, as is usual, away from it.

This is the explanation of the value put upon Botticelli's masterpieces. . . . The painter of the “Venus Rising from the Sea,” of the “Spring,” or of the Villa Lemmi frescos is the greatest artist of lineal design that Europe has ever had.

WALTER PATER “STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE RENAISSANCE”

IN Leonardo's treatise on painting only one contemporary is mentioned by name—Sandro Botticelli. This pre-eminence may be due to chance only, but to some will rather appear a result of deliberate judgment; for people have begun to find out the charm of Botticelli's work, and his name, little known in the last century, is quietly becoming important. In the middle of the fifteenth century he had already anticipated

much of that meditative subtlety which is sometimes supposed peculiar to the great imaginative workmen of its close. Leaving the simple religion which had occupied the followers of Giotto for a century, and the simple naturalism which had grown out of it, a thing of birds and flowers only, he sought inspiration in what to him were works of the modern world, the writings of Dante and Boccaccio, and in new readings of his own of classical stories; or if he painted religious subjects, painted them with an undercurrent of original sentiment which touches you as the real matter of the picture through the veil of its ostensible subject. . . .

Botticelli lived in a generation of naturalists, and he might have been a mere naturalist among them. There are traces enough in his work of that alert sense of outward things which, in the pictures of that period, fills the lawns with delicate living creatures, and the hill-sides with pools of water, and the pools of water with flowering reeds. But this was not enough for him; he is a visionary painter, and in his visionariness he resembles Dante. To him, as to Dante, the scene, the color, the outward image or gesture, comes with all its incisive and importunate reality; but awakes in him, moreover, by some subtle structure of his own, a mood which it awakes in no one else, of which it is the double or repetition, and which it clothes, that all may share it, with sensuous circumstances. . . .

His interest is neither in the untempered goodness of Angelico's saints, nor the untempered evil of Orcagna's "Inferno;" but with men and women, in their mixed and uncertain condition, always attractive, clothed sometimes by passion with a character of loveliness and energy, but saddened perpetually by the shadow upon them of the great things from which they shrink. His morality is all sympathy; and it is this sympathy, conveying into his work somewhat more than it is usual of the true complexion of humanity, which makes him, visionary as he is, so forcible a realist.

It is this which gives to his Madonnas their unique expression and charm. He has worked out in them a distinct and peculiar type, definite enough in his own mind, for he has painted it over and over again, sometimes one might think almost mechanically, as a pastime during that dark period when his thoughts were so heavy upon him. Hardly any collection of note is without one of these circular pictures, into which the attendant angels depress their heads so naively. Perhaps you have sometimes wondered why those peevish-looking Madonnas, conformed to no acknowledged or obvious type of beauty, attract you more and more, and often come back to you when the Sistine Madonna and the virgins of Fra Angelico are forgotten. At first, contrasting them with those, you may have thought that there was even something in them mean or abject, for the abstract lines of the face have little nobleness, and the color is wan. For with Botticelli she too, though she holds in her hands the "Desire of all nations," is one of those who are neither for God nor for his enemies; and her choice is on her face. The white light on it is cast up hard and cheerless from below, as when snow lies upon the ground, and the children look up with surprise at the strange whiteness of the ceiling. Her trouble is in the very caress of the mysterious child, whose gaze is always far from her, and who has already that sweet look of devotion which men have never been able altogether to love, and which still makes the born saint an object almost of suspicion to his earthly brethren. . . .

There is a certain number of artists who have a distinct faculty of their own by which they convey to us a peculiar quality of pleasure which we cannot get elsewhere, and these have their place in general culture, and have to be interpreted to it by those who have felt their charm strongly, and are often the objects of a special diligence and a consideration wholly affectionate, just because there is not about them the stress of a great name and authority. Of this select number Botticelli is one; he has the

freshness, the uncertain and diffident promise which belongs to the earlier Renaissance itself, and makes it perhaps the most interesting period in the history of the mind; in studying his work one begins to understand to how great a place in human culture the art of Italy had been called.

The Florentine School of Painting

1213 TO 1686

C. BAYET

“PRÉCIS D’HISTOIRE DE L’ART”

THE true Italian Renaissance does not clearly begin until the middle of the thirteenth century, but from this time on the development was uninterrupted down to the sixteenth century. Throughout the northern and central parts of Italy individual republics had sprung into being,—republics which by their commerce and industry became prosperous and rich, and in which political life was especially ardent. The accumulation of wealth by these enlightened communities made for artistic progress; and in them, despite political revolution, the arts developed without interruption.

It was with Giotto (1266–1337) that painting in Florence definitely took on a new aspect. Doubtless more than one of his Italian precursors, among them his master, Cimabue, had given proof of originality, but their influence had not been great enough to bring about the formation of a lasting school. Giotto, however, while preserving the religious inspiration of the past, expressed this inspiration in new and more natural forms. His figures have the charm and grace of life; and in attitude, gesture and type, they belong to the world and time in which he lived. Most of the illustrious artists of the fourteenth century in Central Italy flocked to Florence to be near him, and that city became the centre of artistic inspiration. Indeed, so great was his influence, that for many years the work of the Florentine school may be justly reproached with a monotonous uniformity.

During the fifteenth century Florence still maintained her artistic supremacy, but her art gradually changed its character. Faithful still to the observation of nature, it interpreted nature with more largeness and freedom, and at the same time became more studious of the antique. The traditions of the school of Giotto were departed from. Paolo Ucello (1397–1475) introduced the study of perspective, with which the former painters had not concerned themselves; Fra Filippo Lippi (1406–1469), high in the favor in the service of the Medici, treated religious subjects with a liberty of handling and a pronounced tendency toward realism. The most noteworthy master of this half of the fifteenth century is Masaccio (1401–1428), who united unusual force to a wide knowledge of composition. His life was short, but he produced works in which a full maturity of talent is apparent, such, for example, as his frescos in the Church of the Carmine at Florence, which became models for the younger artists of the day.

At the same time there existed in Florence a school devoted to the expression of religious and mystic ideals, and which was linked to that of preceding ages. During the first half of the fifteenth century this school produced a great master in the Dominican monk, Fra Angelico (1387–1455). Having entered a convent in early youth Fra Angelico preserved throughout his life a naïve and profound faith, to which his painting gave expression. He was, however, an exception at Florence, and there followed a period of transition in Florentine work which filled the greater part of the second half of the fifteenth century. The newly arisen passion for antiquity was united and assim-

lated with the naturalistic tendency. The architects Giuliano and Antonio da San Gallo were absorbed in the study of Roman monuments; the Pollaiuoli painted for the Medici pictures representing such subjects as the "Exploits of Hercules;" Botticelli continually borrowed subjects from pagan mythology, even though he chiefly devoted himself to the painting of Christian Madonnas. So numerous indeed are the eminent painters of merit of this type who combined the study of nature with the study of the antique, that it is difficult to single out one of them as an example. Domenico Ghirlandajo (1449-1494) is perhaps one of the most original. His compositions are well studied and the drawing is firm and precise. At about the same time Benozzo Gozzoli (1420-1498) decorated the walls of the Campo Santo at Pisa with paintings of great picturesque charm, while Luca Signorelli (1441-1523) in his frescos in the cathedral of Orvieto was devoting himself to the expression of force, and his studies in anatomy and from the nude sometimes suggest Michelangelo.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century the prevailing spirit of the Florentine Renaissance found a powerful adversary in the monk Girolamo Savonarola, who condemned all study of pagan antiquity, and, with intent to purify and sanctify art, attempted to prohibit the study of the nude. His fervor and the nobility of his ideas gained over even the artists themselves, and many of them became temporarily his partisans. But the straightened mode of life which Savonarola attempted to impose on the Florentines soon became too irksome for them to bear; his influence declined, and after his death in 1498, art returned to the study of the antique with revived enthusiasm. . . .

It was towards the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century that Florence produced her greatest masters,—Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564); for although both of these painters passed the greater part of their lives away from Florence, they were both Florentines by birth.

Almost all the greatest works of Leonardo have, by a strange succession of fatalities, perished; but those which still remain suffice to prove that perhaps no other artist has ever possessed in so high a degree the gift of harmoniously blending grace with expressiveness. His influence upon his contemporaries was so great that there grew up about him a school of his own which is called by his name.

The contrast between Leonardo and Michelangelo is striking. The salient characteristics of the one are harmony and repose, while those of the other are vigor, almost to violence, in both conception and expression. If Michelangelo may be deservedly reproached with a tendency towards excess of action, contorted attitude and exaggeration of type, it may be answered that his methods were due to an attempt at the sincere expression of fervent inspiration, while in the hands of his imitators, who lacked the genius of the master, they became theatrical in effect.

In comparison with these two great Florentines and their Umbrian contemporary, Raphael, the minor artists of the time received less attention than would have been accorded them at any other period. Chief among them should be named Fra Bartolommeo (1475-1517), who followed closely in the steps of Leonardo and Raphael; and Andrea del Sarto (1486-1530), a master of high rank as a colorist, and whose work possesses much individuality, grace, and charm.

With the glory of Leonardo and Michelangelo the art of Florence reached its climax, and thereafter speedily declined. Their pupils, and the followers of Raphael, were, for the most part, content with mere slavish imitation unredeemed by any commanding genius; and Florence soon ceased to occupy the eminent position in art which she had held throughout the preceding century.

MEMBERS OF THE FLORENTINE SCHOOL.

ANDREA TAFI, 1213?-94 (Vasari)—Coppo di Marcovaldo, flourished 1261-75—Gaddo Gaddi, 1239-1312 (according to Vasari)—Giovanni Gualtieri (Cimabue), 1240?-1302—Giotto di Bondone, 1266-1337—Taddeo Gaddi, 1300? to after 1366—Puccio Capanna, first half of 14th century—Buonamico Christofani (Buffalmacco), first half of 14th century—Giovanni Jacobi da Milano, flourished 1365—Giotto (real name doubtful), first half of 14th century—Jacopo Landini, about 1310 to about 1390—Agnolo Gaddi (son of Taddeo Gaddi), 14th century—Andrea Orcagna, 1308-68, and his brothers Leonardo (flourished 1332-47) and Jacopo—Francesco Traini, chief of Orcagna's pupils, flourished 1341-45—Antonio Longhi (Veneziano), flourished 1370-87—Gherardo Starnina, 1354, died after 1406—Giuliano d'Arrigo (Pesello), 1367 to after 1427—Tommaso di Fini (Masolino), born 1383—Lorenzo Monaco, flourished 1404-13—Fra Angelico (Guido di Vicchio), 1387-1455—Andrea del Castagno, 1390-1457—Paolo Uccello, about 1397-1475—Tommaso di S. Giovanni (Masaccio), 1401-28—Fra Filippo Lippi, 1406-69—Francesco di Pesello (Pesellino), 1422-57—Alesso Baldovinetti, 1422-99—Domenico Veneziano, flourished 1438, died 1461—Benozzo Gozzoli, 1420-98—Andrea Verrocchio, 1435 to about 1488—Antonio Pollaiuolo, 1429-98—Cosimo Rosselli, 1439-1507—Luca Signorelli (Da Cortona), 1441-1523; his principal pupil was Girolamo Genga, 1476-1551—Piero Pollaiuolo, 1443, died before 1496—Sandro Botticelli, 1447-1510—Domenico Bigordi (Ghirlandajo), 1449-94; his works were closely imitated by his pupil and brother-in-law Bastiano Mainardi—Leonardo da Vinci, 1452-1519—Lorenzo di Credi, 1459-1537; his chief scholar was Sogliani, 1492-1544—Filippino Lippi, 1460-1504—Piero di Cosimo, 1462-1521—Raffaellino del Garbo, 1466-1524—Francesco Granacci, 1469-1543—Giuliano Bugiardini, 1471-1554—Mariotto Albertinelli, 1474-1515—Fra Bartolommeo della Porta, 1475-1517—Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1475-1564—Francesco di Christofano (Francia Bigio), 1482-1525—Ridolfo Ghirlandajo, 1483-1560—Andrea del Sarto, 1486-1530; his scholar Puligo closely imitated his style—Jacopo Carucci da Pontormo, 1494-1557—Giulio Clovio of Dalmatia, miniaturist, 1498-1578—Angelo Bronzino, 1502-72—Marcello Venusti, died about 1580—Daniele da Volterra, 1509-66—Francesco de' Rossi (called Del Salviati), 1510-63—Giorgio Vasari, art historian, 1512-74—Alessandro Allori, 1535-1607—Orazio Lomi de' Gentileschi, 1562-1646—Christoforo Allori, 1577-1621—Carlo Dolci, 1616-86.

The Works of Botticelli

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

"VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH ST. JOHN"

LOUVRE: PARIS

SIR CHARLES EASTLAKE has written: "We recognize in this group not only the refined sentiment which is characteristic of Botticelli's work, but also—what is rarer—a keen sense of physical beauty. The Virgin's features are delicate in outline, and the transparent veil of white muslin which covers, without concealing, her golden hair, is very tastefully arranged, while the powdered aureole on her head forms an agreeable substitute for the usually solid nimbus. Note the careful modelling of the left hand resting on the Child, whose action is graceful and true to nature. One of the most delightful features of the composition is the hedgerow which forms the background of the group, and in which pink and pale roses alternate with sprays of delicate green leaves, set against the sky."

"PORTRAIT OF PIERO DE' MEDICI THE YOUNGER" UFFIZI GALLERY: FLORENCE

PIERO DE' MEDICI was the eldest son and the successor of Lorenzo the Magnificent. His rule was of short duration, for having, through ambition and temerity, involved the republic in a war with France, which led to the occupation of Florence by the French army, he was at the end of two years deposed by the Florentines, and expelled from the city.

In this portrait (formerly thought to be that of the scholar Pico della Mirandola), Botticelli has represented Piero as holding the medal of his great-grandfather, Cosimo de' Medici, "thus in a manner placing himself," as M. Müntz has said, "under the protection of his illustrious ancestor."

"SPRING"

ACADEMY: FLORENCE

THE subject of this famous picture, painted originally for the Medici villa at Castello, is supposed to have been suggested by a passage from Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura*, lib. V.).

Technically delicate in drawing, soft and grey in color, it is one of the most subtle and fascinating of Botticelli's works. In describing it Julia Cartwright says: "Venus the queen, tall of stature and majestic in bearing, stands in a shady grove, while Spring enters garlanded with flowers, and the Graces, robed in gauzy white draperies, which reveal each motion of their limbs, dance hand in hand on the grass. A beautiful youth wearing a winged helmet stands beside them, plucking fruit from the boughs, and a zephyr sports with a nymph who drops roses from her mouth.

"This time Botticelli has put aside mournful forebodings and speculative musings, and has brought nothing but pleasant imagery to adorn his subject. The joy of the spring has for once dispelled care and thought, the world renews her life, and with her we grow young again."

"CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN"

UFFIZI GALLERY: FLORENCE

IN this picture the Madonna, clad in a dark-green gold-embroidered robe, and holding the Child in her arms, is surrounded by angels, two of whom hold the crown over her head, while two others offer her the book in which she writes the hymn "Magnificat."

John Addington Symonds has said: "It is not perhaps a mere fancy to imagine that the corolla of an open rose suggested to Botticelli's mind the composition of his best-known picture, the circular 'Coronation of the Virgin' in the Uffizi. This masterpiece combines all Botticelli's best qualities. For rare distinction of beauty in the faces it is unique, while the mystic calm and resignation, so misplaced in his Aphrodites, find a meaning here."

"BIRTH OF VENUS"

UFFIZI GALLERY: FLORENCE

"**W**HAT is strangest," writes Walter Pater, "is that Botticelli carries the sentiment [of sadness] into classical subjects, its most complete expression being a picture in the Uffizi, of Venus rising from the sea, in which the grotesque emblems of the Middle Age, and a landscape full of its peculiar feeling, and even its strange draperies powdered all over in the Gothic manner with a quaint conceit of daisies, frame a figure that reminds you of the faultless nude studies of Ingres. At first, perhaps, you are attracted only by a quaintness of design, which seems to recall all at once whatever you have read of Florence in the fifteenth century; afterwards you may think that this quaintness must be incongruous with the subject, and that the color is cadaverous, or at

least cold. And yet the more you come to understand what imaginative coloring really is, that all color is no mere delightful quality of natural things, but a spirit upon them by which they become expressive to the spirit, the better you will like this peculiar quality of color; and you will find that quaint design of Botticelli's a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves even of the finest period. Of the Greeks as they really were, of their differences from ourselves, of the aspects of their outward life, we know far more than Botticelli, or his most learned contemporaries; but for us, long familiarity has taken off the edge of the lesson, and we are hardly conscious of what we owe to the Hellenic spirit. But in pictures like this of Botticelli's you have a record of the first impression made by it on minds turned back towards it in almost painful aspiration from a world in which it had been ignored so long; and in the passion, the energy, the industry of realization, with which Botticelli carries out his intention, is the exact measure of the legitimate influence over the human mind of the imaginative system of which this is the central myth. The light is, indeed, cold—mere sunless dawn; but a later painter would have cloyed you with sunshine; and you can see the better for that quietness in the morning air each long promontory as it slopes down to the water's edge. Men go forth to their labors until the evening; but she is awake before them, and you might think that the sorrow in her face was at the thought of the whole long day of love yet to come. An emblematical figure of the wind blows hard across the grey water, moving forward the dainty-lipped shell on which she sails, the sea 'showing his teeth' as it moves in thin lines of foam, and sucking in one by one the falling roses, each severe in outline, plucked off short at the stalk, but embrowned a little, as Botticelli's flowers always are. Botticelli meant all that imagery to be altogether pleasurable; and it was partly an incompleteness of resources, inseparable from the art of that time, that subdued and chilled it; but his predilection for minor tones counts also; and what is unmistakable is the sadness with which he has conceived the goddess of pleasure as the depository of a great power over the lives of men."

"PALLAS AND A CENTAUR"

PITTI PALACE: FLORENCE

IN 1895 this picture was found by the English artist, Mr. William Spence, in an obscure corner of one of the royal apartments of the Pitti Palace, where for many years it had hung unnoticed and forgotten. It is believed to commemorate the return of Lorenzo de' Medici to Florence in 1480, after his pacificatory visit to Naples, where by his skilful diplomacy peace was brought about between his native city and her enemies,—Pope Sixtus IV. and the King of Naples,—whose alliance had threatened her welfare. In Pallas, the goddess of wisdom, holding captive a centaur, symbol of that lower nature inimical to peace and wisdom, is indicated the triumph of mind over matter, of Lorenzo over his enemies, while in the distance is seen the ship of glad tidings which brought Lorenzo home.

A writer in the Italian Gazette describes the picture as "a harmony of green and gold—gold of the richest tone from the bright bay of the centaur's hide, through all gradations of Pallas's long auburn locks waving below her waist, her light tan buskins, and the ivory tones of the diaphanous white garment where it reveals the limbs beneath—from the rich olive of Pallas's mantle to the pale green of sea and shore, and the grey of the goddess's eyes. The transparent robe is sown with a design composed of three, or sometimes four interlaced gem-set rings, the device of Lorenzo the Magnificent. A sapphire set in four conventional green leaves forms a blossom-like termination to a spiral spray of olive upon either breast, the sprays nearly meeting in the centre being clasped together by Lorenzo's ring itself—a very pledge of peace. Head, arms, and waist are wreathed with the beautifully decorated olive branches, in fantastic luxuriant grace."

"MADONNA ENTHRONED"

BERLIN GALLERY

"BOTTICELLI preferred the circular form for his compositions," writes Sidney Colvin, "and a large number of devotional pieces in this form, by his own hand and those of his scholars, are scattered through the museums and private collections of Europe, and are among the most poetical examples of religious art that Italy has left us."

In the one here reproduced, the Virgin and Child are surrounded by rose-crowned angels bearing in their hands lighted candles entwined with flowers. It is of this picture that Julius Meyer writes: "Gravely reverential the angels stand around the Madonna, their wings still half lifted, as if they had just swept through the air; and in the light, shimmering garments, moved by the faintest breath of wind, we seem still to hear the rustle, as it were, of their flight."

"ADORATION OF THE MAGI"

UFFIZI GALLERY: FLORENCE

THIS picture, intended especially to honor the deceased Cosimo de' Medici, is one of Botticelli's finest works.

Under a ruined pent-house are seen the Mother and Child, their figures illumined by a golden light. In the King who kneels before the Virgin and kisses the foot of the Infant Jesus may be recognized the portrait of Lorenzo de' Medici's grandfather, Cosimo, while in the faces of the other Magi and among those of the Florentine citizens in the foreground of the picture, Botticelli has represented various members of the Medici family. At one side, with the head turned almost fully toward the spectator, may be seen the figure of the painter himself.

Vasari says of this picture: "The composition, the design, and the coloring are so beautiful that every artist who examines it is astonished, and at the time, it obtained so great a name in Florence and other places for the master, that Pope Sixtus IV., having erected the chapel built by him in his palace at Rome, and desiring to have it adorned with paintings, commanded that Sandro Botticelli should be appointed superintendent of the work."

"PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN"

STÄDEL INSTITUTE: FRANKFORT

THIS is one of the few, and it is perhaps the most beautiful of Botticelli's portraits of women. Although sometimes spoken of as a likeness of Lucrezia Tornabuoni, it is more probably an ideal head, and is now generally so considered.

Ulmann gives the following description: "The luxuriant fair hair adorned with strings of pearls and entwined with rose-colored ribbons is arranged in graceful knots. On the crown of the head is a spray of heron-quills held in place by a ruby in the form of a flower. A large cameo, on which is represented the punishment of Marsyas, is worn around the long, slender throat. Pale in color, the profile stands out sharp and distinct in its outline against the dark background.

"The features have nothing about them of the character of a portrait, but represent rather Botticelli's ideal of womanly beauty; the same type which prevails in his goddesses, nymphs, and graces: a high, arched brow; a straight nose with delicate nostrils; a mouth with lips slightly parted and with an expression of sadness about it; large, light eyes shadowed by heavy lids beneath horizontal and delicately pencilled eye-brows. If this picture be compared with the heads of the Graces in the 'Spring,' with the Goddess of Spring in the 'Birth of Venus,' or with the Venus in the picture of 'Venus and Mars' in the London National Gallery, the similarity of feature will be perceived. . . .

"The fact that the woman in the Frankfort picture wears the cameo with the design of Apollo and Marsyas, which was in the possession of the Medici, seems to prove conclusively that the work was painted for a member of that family."

"THE NATIVITY"

NATIONAL GALLERY: LONDON

"I KNOW of no other picture by Botticelli," writes Dr. Richter, "so closely connected with the manner of the *cinquecento* as is this. The centre is occupied by the Nativity, the subject, within the narrow cycle of Christian iconography, most frequently represented in art; but the accessories present subject-matter not only unusual, but by itself unintelligible. In the upper part of the picture is a mysteriously worded Greek inscription in the right interpretation of which the key to the problem is to be found. It runs as follows: 'This picture, I, Alexander, painted at the end of the year 1500, in the troubles of Italy, in the half-time after the time during the fulfilment of the eleventh of St. John, in the Second Woe of the Apocalypse, in the loosing of the devil for three years and a half. Afterwards he shall be chained, and we shall see him trodden down, as in this picture.'

"On May 12, 1497, exactly three and a half years before the date of this inscription, Fra Girolamo Savonarola had been excommunicated by the Pope for heresy and insubordination. His trial, conducted in Florence, was known to be a mere farce; he was tortured; burned alive in the Piazza Signoria amid the triumphant shouts of his enemies, and his ashes flung into the Arno. Gino Capponi, in his history of the Florentine Republic, says: 'For Florence the death of Savonarola meant the triumph of all that was most corrupt; vice was everywhere rampant, and virtuous living was utterly despised.'

"These terrible events seemed to Botticelli foretold in the awful words with which the writer of the Apocalypse shadows forth the Second Woe. . . . He evidently considered that this prophecy was literally fulfilled by the life and death of Savonarola; and he summarizes both the prophecy and his interpretation of it in the Greek inscription above his picture.

"In the foreground are men embraced by angels, while devils hide in the clefts of the rock; these are evidently the 'witnesses,' to whom the Spirit of Life was returned, welcomed back to earth by angels, ere they are rapt heavenward. They bear olive boughs in their hands, because in the Apocalypse they are called olive trees.

"There is but one point at variance with the Biblical text: in it two witnesses are spoken of, here there are three. This deviation was doubtless intentional. When Savonarola died, two others shared his palm of martyrdom, Fra Domenico Buonvicini and Fra Silvestre Marussi; the three figures crowned with myrtle represent the three risen and glorified martyrs."

THE PRINCIPAL PAINTINGS OF BOTTICELLI WITH THEIR
PRESENT LOCATIONS

BERGAMO, MORELLI GALLERY: Portrait of Giuliano de' Medici; Story of Virginia; Head of Christ — BERLIN GALLERY: Madonna and Saints; Madonna Enthroned (Plate VII); St. Sebastian — DRESDEN, ROYAL GALLERY: Scenes from Life of St. Zanobius — FLORENCE, ACADEMY: Coronation; Predella to Coronation; Spring ("Primavera") (Plate III); Madonna, Saints and Angels; Dead Christ; Death of St. Augustine; Salome; Vision of St. Augustine — FLORENCE, PITTI PALACE: Pallas and a Centaur (Plate VI) — FLORENCE, UFFIZI GALLERY: Birth of Venus (Plate V); Judith; Holophernes; St. Augustine; Portrait of Piero de' Medici the Younger (Plate II); Calumny; Adoration of the Magi (Plate VIII); Coronation of the Virgin (Plate IV); Madonna and Angels ("of the Pomegranate") — FLORENCE, CORSINI GALLERY: Portrait of Man with Ring — FLORENCE, CAPPONI PALACE: Communion of St. Jerome — FLORENCE, CHURCH OF OGNISSANTI: St. Augustine (fresco) — FRANKFORT, STÄDEL INSTITUTE: Portrait of a Woman (Plate IX) — LONDON, NATIONAL GALLERY: Adoration of the Magi; Portrait of a Young Man; Mars and Venus; The Nativity (Plate X) — MILAN, POLDI-PEZZOLI COLLECTION: Madonna —

PARIS, LOUVRE: Madonna and Child with St. John (Plate 1); Lorenzo Tornabuoni Introduced into the Circle of the Sciences (fresco); Giovanna Tornabuoni with Venus and the Graces (fresco)—ROME, SISTINE CHAPEL (frescos): Moses in the Land of Midian; Destruction of Korah; Temptation of Christ; Single figures of Popes—ST. PETERSBURG, HERMITAGE GALLERY: Adoration of the Magi.

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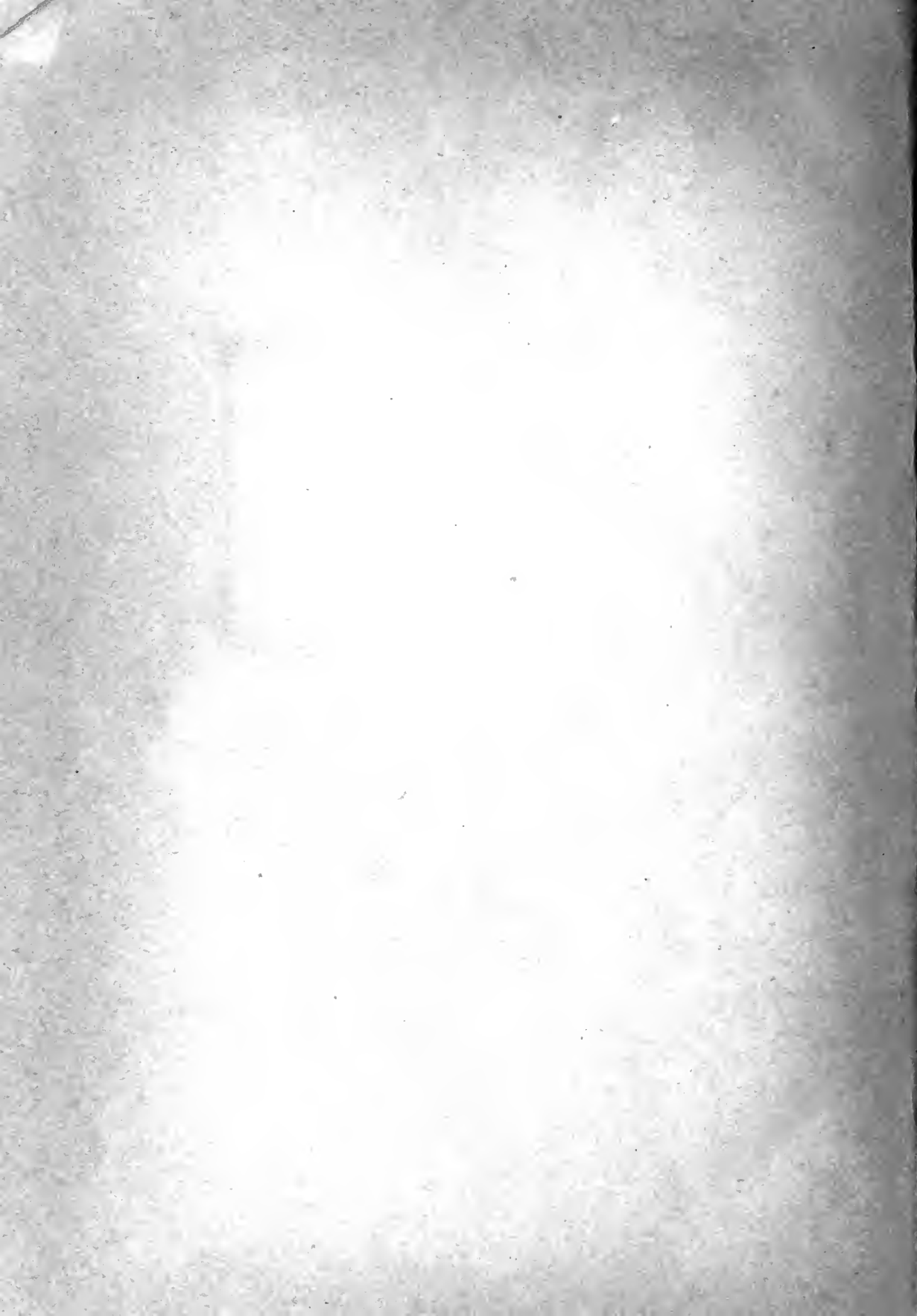
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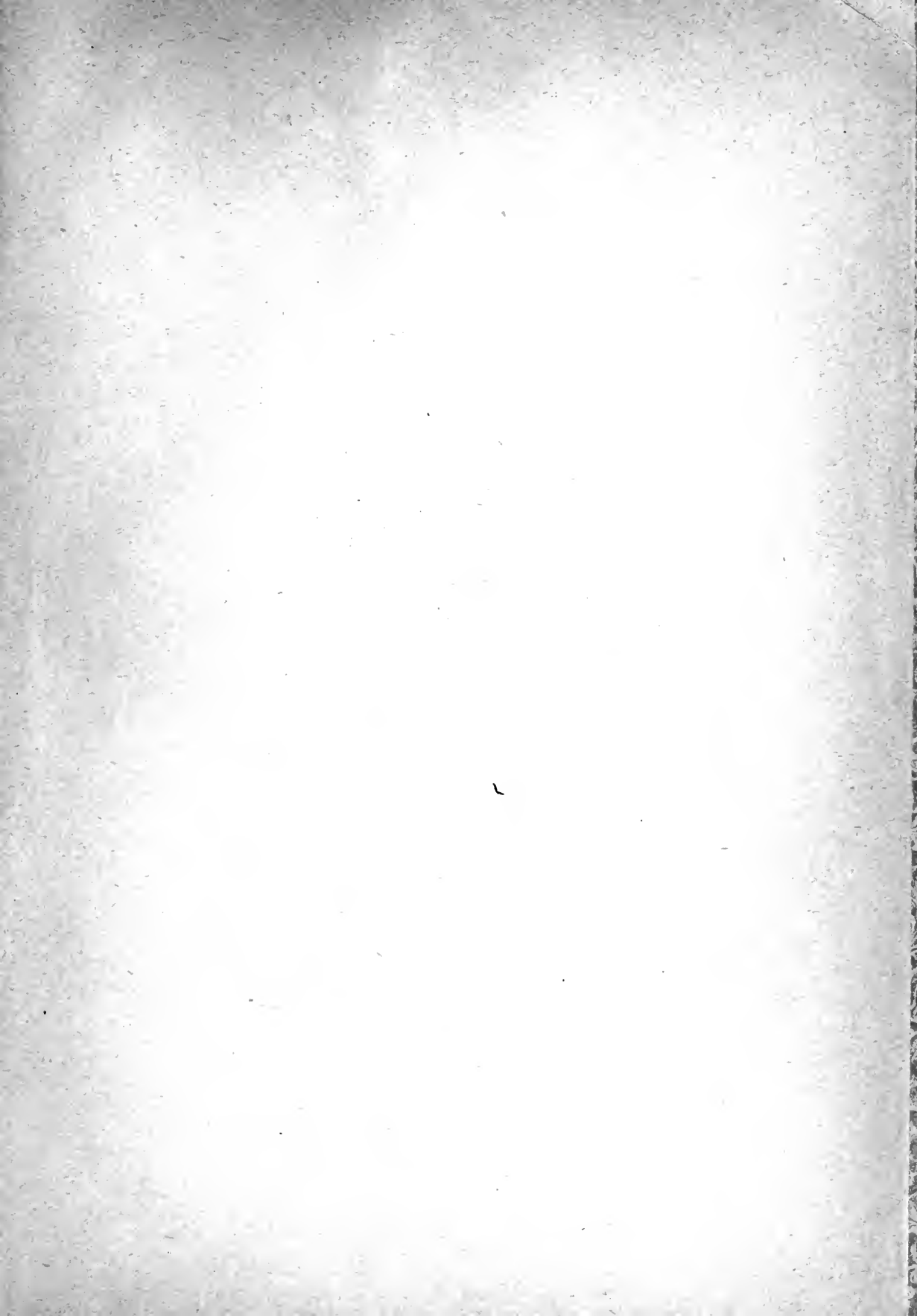
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